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LETTER DATED 12 JUNE 1996 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF UGANDA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a statement issued by the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Uganda in response to the letter from the Permanent Mission of Zaire contained in Security Council document S/1996/413 of 10 June 1996.

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Perezi KARUKUBIRO KAMUNANWIRE
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

Statement by the Ministry of Defence of Uganda

The Ministry of Defence has noted with great concern the contents of the letter dated 8 June 1996 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Zaire to the United Nations contained in Security Council document S/1996/413 to the effect that a force from Uganda attacked Zaire through Bunagana killing 30 Zairean civilians.

The Ministry of Defence wishes to categorically deny such allegations and condemns this kind of unprovoked fabrication of hostile stories against Uganda. We believe this is aimed at tarnishing our image as well as diverting international attention from the events currently going on in Zaire.

The facts on the ground are that on the morning of 6 June 1996, at around 0100 hours, gunfire was heard inside Zaire in areas close to the Ugandan border post of Bunagana. Following that incident, refugees started entering Uganda to escape the fighting and by the following day the number of refugees received as a result of the incident had come to 800 and 200 head of cattle. This matter has been reported and handed over to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Ministry of Local Government for appropriate handling. The refugees are available for interview by anybody interested in the actual facts.

The Ministry wis[illegible] to make it absolutely clear that the event of 6 June 1996 is not an isolated incident that has led to refugees flocking into Uganda escaping from areas of conflict in Zaire. It is indeed public knowledge that we have received several hundreds of Zairean refugees who have entered Uganda in the recent past through different border points at Kisoro, Kinkizi and Mpondwe.

It is equally important to note that on 26 April 1996 a group of Ugandan dissidents led by one Haji Kabeba based in Zaire attacked Kisoro, in south-western Uganda, through Busanza and killed three Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF) soldiers, two soldiers' wives and one child. This group was repulsed, seven of the bandits were killed and three captured alive. Information gathered from those who were captured revealed that they were linked to the Sudan-based West Nile Bank Front of Juma Oris. We indeed issued a statement condemning this unprovoked attack and have since sent a note of protest to the Government of Zaire who have not responded to date.

However, we would like to reiterate that the Government of Uganda believes in peaceful coexistence with our neighbours aimed at promoting regional stability, especially in the Great Lakes region, which is currently facing some of the worst social, political and security problems. The public is therefore reassured that despite such attacks we shall not be deterred from pursuing this noble cause.

Uganda will continue to work tirelessly with all her neighbours and the international community at large to find a peaceful and lasting solution to the problems in the region.